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ABSTRACT

Many graduate programs in communication are plagued by "schizophrenia": a wish for relevance to today's problems on the one hand and an allegiance to objective research on the other. Rather than scrapping traditional practices, graduate programs should continue to emphasize the training of research scholars. The research tradition has justified itself by the advances in communication theory and methodology over the past 20 years. Further, good researchers are the ones most likely to benefit both their students and discipline. One beneficial change would be the movement toward a limited number of centers of excellence-some training humanists, others scientists, rather than continuing with the many doctoral programs now existing. Some programs would do better to stress utilization of research and the development of teaching expertise, for use in community colleges and inner-city schools. Such a program would be more useful than training every graduate student to do research. (JK)

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"I Think My Schizophrenia is Better Today,"
Said the Director of Graduate Studies Unanimously

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My outrageous titular parody of the venerable "Tom Swifty" is not merely an act of frivolity. Many contemporary graduate programs in human communication are plagued by acute schizophrenia. The roots of this intellectual malady can be diagnosed as follows: on the one hand, there is a long-standing allegiance to the scholarly values traditionally linked with graduate education; on the other, there is the uneasy feeling that our academic mission often falls short of the mark, that we are not really preparing our charges for a piece of the action. Thus, in a single day--even a single hour--it is not unusual for us both to harken affirmatively to the clarion call of relevance and to sing the praises of the life of detached, objective, scholarly contemplation. That some malaise should result from this apparent inconsistency is hardly surprising.

Still, my basic contention is that this particular inconsistency is a healthy thing, rather than an albatross around our necks. As my title suggests, we need to learn to live creatively with our inconsistency, rather than eliminating it. For there is much to be said for both making new friends and keeping the old; graduate programs in human communication must continue to provide students with many of the experiential staples available to their forebearers, while at the same time creating new experiences which take account of the demands and priorities of late twentieth century American society.

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Of course, this position is not as exciting as a call for some kind of radical intellectual revolution, a practice currently fashionable among certain contemporary educators. But it would be intellectually dishonest for me to argue that I see nothing worth preserving in our present approach to graduate education. Quite the contrary, I believe most graduate programs in communication have improved markedly in the past decade: faculties are more competent, students more exciting, and opportunities for significant scholarship more numerous. We must capitalize on these strengths in future attempts to expand existing programs and to develop new ones. Hence, the remarks that follow center on two areas: things we are presently doing that we should strive to do even better and new experiences and activities that are needed to keep pace with the needs of our society. Let me deal with the established practices--the old friends--first.

The Old Friends of Graduate Education

Central to most graduate programs in human communication has been a set of activities and experiences designed to produce graduates who are competent, productive research scholars. This objective of research productivity, while generally accorded at least lip service by most graduate faculty, has not been without its detractors. At a relatively superficial level, numerous individuals--most of whom sport singularly undistinguished track records in research--have bemoaned what they perceive as a "publish or perish" mentality. More significant are the criticisms of those persons who subscribe to the value of research but who question the import and utility of the research actually being con-

ducted. Since I will argue that a continued emphasis on research apprenticeship is essential to the vitality of numerous graduate programs in communication, it is necessary to briefly scrutinize the arguments of these skeptics.

At the time I received my Ph.D. from the University of Iowa in 1961, my thesis advisor, Samuel Becker, presented me with a final required article which is today dog-eared from numerous readings. Reproduced in all the illegible glory of early verifax, the article, taken from the AAUP Bulletin, bore the appropriate title, "The Sweet, Sad Song of the Devoted College Teacher." Throughout its half dozen pages, the author's disdain for that brand of academician who constantly berates the emphasis placed on research and publication rings loud and clear. On what grounds, he asks, rests the assumption that a lively interest in research; and its tangible product, the publication, implies disinterest or incompetence in teaching. In fact, he argues persuasively, who is better equipped to assist young minds in moving beyond intellectual puberty than the person who actively pursues his own research interests. Finally, the author notes a strange paradox: the "devoted" teachers who protest most loudly that rewards for teaching skill have been sacrificed on the altar of research are often the very same people least willing to hold up their classroom wares for objective evaluation by their colleagues or by the students whom they supposedly serve. Instead, they retreat to a position which emphasizes that the "dynamic" of the classroom would be disrupted by an outside observer and which generates innumerable assertions regarding the inadequacies of any objective instrument for obtaining student response to their instruction.

My endorsement of the sentiments contained in the "Sweet, Sad Song ..." should make it clear that I have little patience with the publish or perish crew. To be sure, the system sometimes spawns excesses and evils, as does any imperfect system created by human beings. Still, the values underlying the system rest on sound scholarly premises; this being the case, we profit more from continued efforts to rid the system of its excesses and evils, rather than from engaging in empty or spiteful rhetoric which pleads for its abandonment. Show me a graduate student with a healthy respect for, and commitment to the activities of research and publication, and I will gamble on the likelihood that he will exert a positive impact on his students and his discipline alike.

But what of the argument that much of what passes for communication research is little more than an ostentatious exercise in triviality? Certainly at some time or another, every serious student of human communication has entertained serious doubts about the worth of the scholarly commerce in which he is engaged. Nevertheless, to dismiss several decades of communication research as totally irrelevant and unimportant is hasty and cavalier. Again, the loudest soundings often emanate from those persons whose professional pursuits have carried them far from the beaten paths of research. Coming from such persons, blanket indictments of the discipline's research posture qualify as little more than manifestations of the sour grapes phenomenon. Moreover, casting aside questions of motives (for after all, the validity of what a man says and his reasons for saying it are separate issues), the contention that most communication research is of little or no value is, in my mind, seriously wanting. While we

admittedly do not suffer from an excess of empirical riches, we know a good deal more about such communication phenomena as source credibility, fear-arousing message appeals, recipient ego-involvement, and message flow within various communication networks--to name but a few--than we did a decade or two previously. In addition, the writings of such theorists as Burke, McLuhan, Innis, McKeon, Thayer, and Watzlawick have not only enriched our empirical conceptions of communication, they have pointed to many of the ethical and aesthetic considerations inherent in every communication transaction.

Most importantly, the very act of doing research frequently underscores the flaws and inadequacies of our present investigational paradigms. Indeed, our current interest in systems approaches to communication and in multivariate techniques of data analysis stems from perceived conceptual and methodological shortcomings in much of the previous research. While it is impossible to predict whether these innovations will provide a giant stride forward, it seem indisputable that their development rests at least partially on the research legacy willed to us by our intellectual forefathers.

Thus, as indicated by my lengthy defense, I believe the development of research competency should remain an important goal of many graduate programs in communication. Given the soundness of this objective, I am heartened by the conviction that we are producing more competent researchers today than in the early years of the discipline. At the time of my graduation, a fair understanding of cognitive dissonance theory and the ability to do a simple analysis of variance on a desk calculator were highly prized

skills. In some departments, today's students transcend this level of sophistication during the first quarter in residence. In the past few years, I have had the pleasure--admittedly tinged with a bit of anxiety--of working closely with students whose knowledge of such areas as linguistic theory, stochastic models, relative conflict, and computer simulation far eclipse my own. That I have contributed to these students' intellectual growth, I can only hope; that they have contributed to mine, I can readily attest.

Nor is this rise in the qualitative barometer limited to my own departmental weather station. Last year, I was one of several people charged with the responsibility of choosing three recipients of the Speech Communication Association's Outstanding Dissertation Award. To label the task diffiuclt would be a definite understatement; in fact, had these Awards been instituted five years earlier, I suspect that any of the eight dissertations I read would have won hands down. Where I had originally assumed that some entries could be eliminated on grounds of gross conceptual or methodological defects, I found myself reduced to making judgments on rather esoteric, complex criteria: criteria such as conceptual richness and probable research payoffs. While the task added to my plentiful supply of grey hair, it reinforced my belief that our graduate programs are producing a much better brand of research scholar.

Since today's graduates are tomorrow's graduate faculty, a continued increase in research sophistication does not seem to be an unreasonable expectation. Still, I worry that some departments may be spreading their scholarly skills too thin, particularly in this era of steadily expanding

knowledge and rapidly decreasing financial resources. For me, the old saw, "Liebnitz was the last man who knew everything," has a powerful persuasive ring. Specialization is an inevitable by-product of the knowledge explosion, and even in his quest for specialized knowledge, the graduate apprentice profits from exposure to a substantial cadre of scholarly craftsmen. The days of a Ph.D. in Professor Smith or Professor Jones--graduate education's answer to Mark Hopkins on the other end of a log--are relegated to the status of a fond memory; although the graduate student will continue to develop intimate professional relationships with one or two of the faculty, he will range far and wide for the skills and knowledge needed for mature scholarship.

Given this academic state of affairs, movement toward the development of a limited number of centers of excellence seems both wise and prudent. Certain of these centers would assume the task of training humanistically oriented scholars, while others would cater to students of a scientific bent. In either case, the number and location of these centers should be determined by two criteria: the number of chips (literally translated as human, physical, and economic resources) available in existing programs and the number of trained researchers that the market is capable of absorbing. In every case, these centers of excellence would be identifiable by their graduate research faculty and by their emphasis on the training of research scholars.

The angry cries of opponents of this proposal can be readily anticipated. Among some students of communication, there exists the naive faith that if a humanist and a scientist are housed in the same building,

all sorts of benefits will mystically accrue. The sociological evidence to support this proposition, if not nonexistent, is certainly limited. What seems to occur more frequently is that the student is exposed to a dab of this, a smattering of that, and a great deal of bickering about the relative merits of the two scholarly stances. Or alternatively, a departmental power figure emerges from one of the two camps and relegates members of the outgroup to second class academic citizenship. Finally, and most crucially, even if such internecine strife can be averted, the possibility of recruiting an adequate staff in both areas is financially remote, and in those rare cases where an economic cornucopia is unearthed, students are spread so thin that they are unlikely to acquire the depth of knowledge required to function effectively in their scholarly roles.

There is, however, a second argument against my centers of excellence notion. Bluntly stated, its realization would put a number of doctoral programs, as presently conceived, out of business. In assessing this argument, the phrase, "as presently conceived," assumes crucial significance, for I wish to contend that many of these programs should be radically restructured to better meet the needs of contemporary society. Indeed, graduate education in communication needs to make some new friends, and it is to these acquaintances that I now turn.

The New Friends of Graduate Education

While the goal of training research scholars should be central to many graduate programs, the unquestioned universal hegemony of this objective has inhibited the development of innovative graduate curricula designed to produce students capable of dealing with some of our most pressing social

and educational needs. As the center of the teaching job market shifts radically, this fact becomes increasingly apparent. Perhaps the problem of primary concern to me can best be underscored by example.

Several times in the past months, I have received inquiries concerning the availability of persons to teach communication in two year community colleges. Without exception, administrators in these schools have expressed little or no interest in hiring Ph.Ds. For persons with the doctorate, concern for the location of the library or the computer is perceived as exceeding commitment to effective teaching. "Give us a good MA with some ability in, and concern for teaching," say the administrators, "Those Ph.Ds don't think about anything except research."

Moreover, suppose a community college or inter-city school agreed to accept doctorates on its faculty. Given the values that are presently drummed into our graduate students, how many of them would be willing to accept such a position? Although we realize that the job market is becoming glutted with applicants, most of our graduate programs still proceed as though their only justification is to train graduate students to become research scholars in some 25 or 30 major universities around the country.

Obviously, this particular homeymoon is about to end. That jobs are increasingly diffuclt to come by is attested to by numerous omens. At the recent Central States Speech Convention, an entire program was devoted to tips for improving one's employability. Department chairmen and directors of graduate study around the country report greater difficulty placing their students. But despite the potential gravity of the problem,

communication educators do not seem to be taking aggressive steps to combat it; instead, a "business as usual" attitude prevails in many graduate programs.

A partial answer to our dilemma lies in radical restructuring of many graduate programs, restructuring that provides students with experiences which prepare them for the jobs that are available. Rather than research training, research utilization and the development of teaching expertise should be stressed. Graduates of such programs would be prepared, both attitudinally and professionally, to deal with culturally disadvantaged students, students harboring particular career-oriented objectives, and students who comprise the heterogeneous institution labeled the community college.

Obviously, a thorough description of these new programs transcends both the scope of this paper and the imagination of its author. Unlike most existing graduate programs, training in research skills would not have top priority. Instead, the program would focus upon a core of experiences aimed at developing the student's ability to teach effectively in a variety of classroom climates. The program would move beyond traditional teaching techniques, with emphasis placed on gaming and simulation, role-playing, and other involvement techniques. Finally, a concerted attempt would be made to provide understanding of the various clienteles served by community colleges, inner-city schools, and similar educational institutions.

In such a graduate program, the emphasis would not be on the <u>creation</u> of new information and knowledge, but rather upon its <u>application</u>. How

can the findings of the communication researcher improve the learning climate for a group of community college students? What inputs can the teacher provide for the researcher; what questions must be answered if communication is to be taught more effectively? One can imagine that truly symbiotic relationships would develop between the producer and utilizer of research, relationships based upon mutual intellectual and pedagogical concerns.

So deeply is the value for research training imbedded in contemporary graduate education that the most violent objection to my proposal can easily be anticipated. Skeptics will assert that I am advocating an educational caste system composed of first class citizens (researchers) and second class inhabitants (teachers and knowledge utilizers). Given the perpetuation of our present values in graduate education, this charge has considerable merit. But after all, our values are what we make them; the new, innovative programs I am suggesting will attract students to the extent that we ascribe value to them. It is perhaps time to dispel the myth that every student who receives an advanced degree in communication must be committed to a career of research. For there are important human needs and problems that must be attacked, many of which are in the educational arena. Moreover, in keeping with society's activist mood, many intelligent students prefer the intense involvement and commitment to service central to social action ventures. If we can create imaginative new programs that cater to these students, our discipline can contribute to the building of a better society--and coincidentally, feather its own nest by tailoring graduate experiences to the existing job market.

Using broad brush strokes, I have painted a picture of a graduate enterprise that is fundamentally healthy, an enterprise that attracts a substantial cadre of excellent students and competent faculty. Still, this enterprise needs to adapt to meet new professional exigencies and new social needs. In particular, we need to enlarge our vistas concerning the objectives of graduate education in communication. While a healthy respect for scholarly productivity should continue to be a hallmark of some programs, it is also necessary to create new experiences which focus on urgent societal needs. For the more versatile students who will come our way in the next decade, we must develop graduate programs of comparable versatility. If we are equal to the task, we should indeed be able to affirm unanimously that our schizophrenia has taken a turn for the better.